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ABSTRACT

A brief history of education in the state of North Carolina provides a look at public schools and the individuals who were most instrumental in their development. Chapter 1 focuses on the colonial period when education for the majority of North Carolina students was almost non-existent. Chapter 2 covers the State Constitution adopted in 1776 that included a provision for education but no funding and created citizen dissatisfaction with the educational process. Chapter 3 discusses the Education Act of 1839 and the expansion and progress created for North Carolina public schools. The topic of chapter 4 is the new State Constitution of 1868 that provided for free education for children and the establishment of teacher training institutes. Chapter 5 presents Governor Charles B. Aycock's impact on universal public education in the early 20th century. Chapter 6 explains the halt to progress and prosperity with the Great Depression. As a result of the Great Depression, the School Machinery Act established the county as the basic governmental unit for operating public schools. Chapter 7 discusses the middle years of the 20th century and the impact of the civil rights movement. Chapter 8 describes the modern era expansion and improvement of educational programs. The final chapter summarizes educational reform in the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s. A timeline of important individuals, decisions, and events in North Carolina history juxtaposes the chapter text. A chronology highlights major events in the history of public school education in North Carolina. (CK)

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the History of Education in North Carolina

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North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Bob Etheridge, State Superintendent

FOREWORD

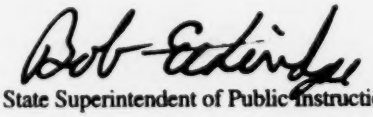
As we continue our efforts to bring the best education possible to every child in North Carolina, it encourages us to look at education's past in this state.

I am indebted to the late Mr. William W. Peek, a long-time friend of public schools and employee of the Department of Public Instruction, for writing this brief history. This publication is dedicated to him in appreciation of his life-long service to the students and educators of North Carolina. It is intended to provide a capsule look at our public schools and the individuals who were most instrumental in their development.

Strong leaders over the years have taken political risks for our children — from 1839 when the first common school law was enacted, providing the basis for combining state and local funds for school support, to the Great Depression when North Carolina took over the funding of public schools.

It must have been very difficult in 1869 to pass a general school tax and to provide for a four-month school term. It was difficult, too, for Governor Charles B. Aycock to reorganize the State Literary Fund as a revolving fund for building schools and to build more than 3,000 school houses from 1900-1910 — an average of one each day. The accomplishments came, one step at a time: providing free textbooks; lengthening the school term to six months, then eight months, and finally nine months; adding the 12th grade; beginning a school lunch program; and making kindergarten available to all our children.

Come take a walk with me through education's past, that we may gain courage to meet the needs for our children's future.



State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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The Colonial Period

Throughout the colonial period, the provincial government accepted no responsibility for education. The meager educational opportunities which did exist resulted primarily from the efforts of religious leaders of the Anglican, Presbyterian, Quaker, and Moravian churches and from private tutors employed by a single family or several families in a cooperative undertaking. Literate parents sometimes taught their own children and, perhaps, the children of neighbors.

A few affluent parents, mostly plantation owners and merchants, sent their children to England for further education beyond that provided by tutors. In a very few instances, in early population centers like Edenton and New Bern, schools with several teachers were established. A state highway historical marker in Elizabeth City reads "First School. Charles Griffin Taught In This County, the First Known School in North Carolina, 1705-1708." These early schools in Pasquotank, Chowan, and Craven were the exceptions rather than the rule.

Despite these efforts, however, for the majority of North Carolina children, educational opportunities were almost non-existent. This was particularly true in the more rural areas, where sparse population, bad roads, poverty, and prevailing illiteracy often combined to create a self-perpetuating cycle of illiteracy and economic depression that was to haunt the people of North Carolina during the early days of statehood.

Speaking of the people of rural North Carolina during the colonial period, Dr. Hugh Lefler states: "The farmers were not much interested in books and book learning. Few of them had any education, and most of the children never learned to read or write. The only education that the farmers had was gained from meeting people and from dealing with the problems of their daily work."

Sen. Archibald Murphey

1817

- State Senator Archibald Murphey introduced plan for state public school fund

Gov. Benjamin Smith

1810	Benjamin Smith Gov. 1810-1811	William Hawkins Gov. 1811-1814	William Miller Gov. 1814-1817	John Branch Gov. 1817-1820	Jesse Franklin Gov. 1820-1821	1820

The Constitution of 1776
AND THE EARLY YEARS OF STATEHOOD

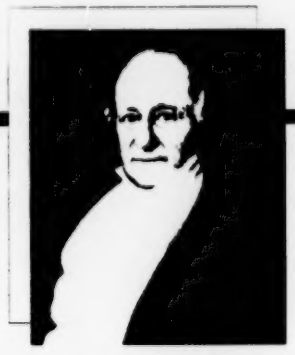
The State Constitution adopted in 1776 included a provision for education that stated, "A School or Schools shall be established by the Legislature for the convenient Instruction of Youth." However, leaders apparently did not envision anything resembling public schools as they are known today, having in mind privately owned and operated academies supported by money paid to the teacher by the students or parents. The Legislature provided no money to support these academies, but did authorize private entrepreneurs to establish the academies, hire teachers, and fix charges for attending the school.

The Constitution authorized the establishment of a University, which was chartered on December 11, 1789, and opened officially on January 15, 1795. No funds were appropriated for the University at that time, but the State made a $10,000 loan to the University, which was later converted to a gift. Receipts from escheats and arrearages constituted the only revenue provided by the State, and the University initially had to depend largely on gifts of land and money and tuition charges for capital costs and operating funds.

By 1800, about 40 academies had been established, primarily for white males, although there were two well-known academies for white females—Mordecai Female Seminary in Warrenton and Salem Female Academy in what is now Winston-Salem. There was no school for blacks.

These academies were certainly useful in preparing a relatively small number of individuals for civic leadership, but the absence of State funding meant that education in the academies was available only to the affluent. For the less well-to-do, "subscription schools" were sometimes available when several families joined together to

Gov. Hutchings G. Burton



Gov. James Iredell, Jr.

1825

- State Literary Fund established to subsidize schools.

1820 | Gabriel Holmes Gov. 1821-1824 | Hutchings G. Burton Gov. 1824-27 | James Iredell, Jr. Gov. 1827-1828 | John Owen Gov. 1828-1830 | 1830

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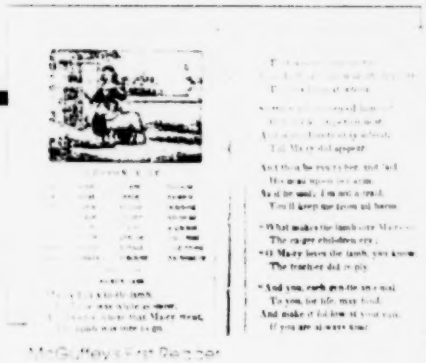
subscribe funds to hire a teacher (probably itinerant) for a period of two or three months to teach the children of the subscribing families. Even this alternative was not available to the large number of families too poor to participate and without the education to teach their own children.

Inadequate funding was only a part of the problem. Widespread apathy toward education was prevalent in the early 19th Century and strong support for public education was slow to develop in North Carolina. Dr. Lefler paints this dismal picture: "Even as late as 1840, one out of every four white men and women, and practically all Negroes, could not read and write. North Carolina had one of the highest rates of illiteracy of any state in the Union."

Many North Carolina citizens were dissatisfied with the deplorable state of affairs and efforts were begun to remedy the situation. The brightest light among those who wanted to wake up North Carolina and start it moving forward was a young state senator from Orange County named Archibald D. Murphey. As early as 1817, Murphey presented to the General Assembly a series of brilliant reports for the improvement of life in North Carolina, including a plan for the state's intervention in the educational process.

Murphey's plan called for the General Assembly to establish a public school fund and further provided that a State Board be elected to manage that fund. It provided that any county which would build two or more schools for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic would be provided funds for paying the teachers' salaries from the public school fund. It also provided for the state to pay one-third of expenses for 10 regional academies scattered over the state to teach classical languages and other college preparatory courses. Although the General Assembly did not immediately implement Murphey's educational plan, it undoubtedly was influential in bringing about the public school legislation which was ultimately adopted. Indeed Murphey, who was a



Gov. Edward B. Dudley

1839

- First Public School Law enacted at the urging of leaders of the Literary Fund. Permitted counties to vote for or against a school tax. Literary Fund provided $2 for each $1 locally raised, marking inauguration of principle of combined state and local funding for schools

1830 | **Montford Stokes** Gov. 1830-1832 | **David L. Swain** Gov. 1832-1835 | **Richard D. Speight, Jr.** Gov. 1835-1836 | **Edward B. Dudley** Gov. 1836-1841 | 1840

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noted lawyer and judge rather than an educator, came to be known as the "father of public education."

A part of Murphey's plan was implemented when the General Assembly established in 1825 the Literary Fund and appointed a Literary Board to manage the fund. The proceeds of the Fund were to be used to subsidize public schools. The Fund itself was a permanent, non-reverting fund, made up of dividends from certain state-owned bank stocks, dividends from state-owned stock in certain navigation companies, and certain other specified funds, including any future appropriation that might be made directly to the Fund. Although the Literary Fund was not large enough to have great impact at first, it was extremely important because it represented the state's first commitment of funds for public school programs.

The Education Act of 1839 – A PERIOD OF EXPANSION

The president and directors of the Literary Fund, which had some of the functions that much later would become functions of a State Board of Education, in 1838 made comprehensive recommendations to the General Assembly pertaining to needed legislation in the area of education. Many of these recommendations were incorporated into the legislation enacted by the General Assembly in January of 1839. This first public school law had a number of weaknesses, but it nevertheless made a significant impact on subsequent educational legislation.

Among other things, the Education Act permitted the people of each county to vote "For" or "Against" a school tax. If the vote was favorable, the State Literary Fund was

"Old field school," or subscription school

1840

- First public schools opened in Rockingham County. Six years later, every county had one or more public schools. By 1850, there were 2,657 common schools in operation.

1840 **John M. Morehead** Gov. 1841-1845 **William A. Graham** Gov. 1845-1849 **Charles Manley** Gov. 1849 -1851 **1850**

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to provide two dollars ($2.00) for each one dollar ($1.00) raised by the tax, which established the precedent of school support from a combination of state and local funds. The law also provided for the appointment from five to 10 "superintendents" in each county to oversee the schools, which was the embryonic beginning of present day local boards of education. Weaknesses in the law included the fact that no provision was made for establishing standards for teacher qualifications and employment, subjects to be taught, length of the school term, and a central administrative office at the state level.

Despite these weaknesses, however, the Act ushered in a period of expansion and progress for North Carolina public schools. In 1840 there were 632 common schools with 14,937 pupils, an average of less than 24 pupils per school. At the same time there were 140 academies with 4,398 pupils, an average of just over 31 pupils per academy. By the outbreak of war in 1861, there were approximately 4,000 common schools with 160,000 pupils, an average of 40 pupils per school and 350 academies with approximately 15,000 pupils, an average of almost 43 pupils per academy.

This unparalleled growth did not occur uniformly over the 20-year period. During the early part of the period, growth and expansion were relatively slow, in part because the General Assembly had rejected for several sessions the recommendations made by the Literary Board that the General Assembly create an office of Superintendent of Schools to oversee the State School System. Finally, in 1852, the legislature created the Office of Superintendent of Common Schools and appointed Calvin H. Wiley to fill this position.

Superintendent Wiley was a reformer at heart, and he devoted all of his considerable energy and talent to improving North Carolina schools. Under his leadership, great progress was made. By the time the Civil War erupted in 1861, it was generally recognized that North Carolina had one of the best school systems in the South.

Gov. David S. Reid

Supt. Calvin H. Wiley

1852

- Office of Superintendent of Public Schools created, with Calvin H. Wiley the first to occupy the position.

1850 | **David S. Reid** Gov. 1851-1854 | **Warren Winslow** Gov. 1854-1855 | **Thomas Bragg** Gov. 1855-1859 | **John W. Ellis** Gov. 1859-1861 | **1860**

Calvin H. Wiley
Superintendent of Common School, 1852-1865 until office abolished

Unfortunately, but predictably, the War brought this progressive period in education to an abrupt halt. The system deteriorated rapidly, and by the end of the War, only a handful of schools remained open. The State Literary Fund was all but wiped out, and in 1866 the Office of Superintendent of Common Schools was abolished. Education in North Carolina was at a very low ebb, and the future looked bleak indeed.

The Constitution of 1868

RECONSTRUCTION THROUGH 1990

The new State Constitution, adopted in 1868, contained a relatively strong article on public education. Generally unpopular at the time because it was viewed as the product of a "carpetbag government," it was, nevertheless, a rather progressive document for that period and later came to be recognized as such. It required the General Assembly to "provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of public schools, wherein tuition shall be free of charge to all of the children of the State between the ages of six and twenty-one years."

The new Constitution also provided for a Superintendent of Public Instruction to be elected by the people for a four-year term, for a school term of at least four months each year, for an "irreducible educational fund" with specified revenue sources, and for a State Board of Education consisting solely of ex-officio members (the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Auditor, Superintendent of Public Works, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Attorney General). It further specified that the Governor was to be president and the Superintendent of Public Instruction was to be secretary of the State Board of Education. Although numerous

1868

- New State Constitution adopted, creating "a general and uniform system of public schools to be operated at least four months each year for young people between the ages of 6 and 21."
- State Board of Education created.

1869

- Constitutional provisions of 1868 implemented requiring the state to "provide by taxation and otherwise for a general and uniform system of public schools."

Gov. Zebulon B. Vance

1860 **Henry T. Clark** Gov. 1861-1862 | **Zebulon B. Vance** Gov. 1862-1865 | **William W. Holden** Gov. 1865 | **Jonathon Worth** Gov. 1865-1868 | **William W. Holden** Gov. 1868-1870 **1870**

Samuel S. Ashley
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1868-1871

amendments and some rewrites have occurred over the years, many of the basic principles contained in the Constitution of 1868 are still in effect today.

The 1869 session of the General Assembly enacted the necessary enabling legislation to put the Constitution of 1868 into effect, including provisions for educating blacks. However, necessary funding for implementing the public school laws was slow in coming and for a considerable period most of the educational financial burden fell on local governments. Particularly in the cities and towns, local taxes were levied in support of education, but education in rural areas did not recover from setbacks during the war years until the end of the century.

At the State level, the greatest impact on public education seems to have been the establishment of "normal" schools, or teacher training institutions around the State—eight for whites and five for blacks. The term for the white normal schools was usually one month in the summer, while the term in the black normal schools was eight or nine months. This was true because white college graduates and white college students were available as teachers, whereas no similar cadre of black teachers was yet available. The annual appropriation for the black normal schools was approximately double that for the white institutions, in recognition of the need to catch up in preparing black teachers.

Further indication of this new emphasis on teacher training is found in the establishment by the 1897 General Assembly of a State Board of Examiners as an agency of the State Board of Education. This Board was chaired by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and was authorized to define and grant first grade life certificates, to furnish annual examinations to supervisors and to recommend a course of reading and professional study for teachers. Prior to that time, certification was primarily a local matter, with some assistance from the normal schools.

North Carolina Reader III, 1868

Gov. Tod R. Caldwell

1870 | Tod R. Caldwell, Gov. 1870-1874 | Curtis H. Brogden, Gov. 1874-1877 | Zebulon B. Vance, Gov. 1877-1879 | Thomas J. Jarvis, Gov. 1879-1885 | 1880

Alexander McIver, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1871-1875

Stephen D. Pool, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1875-1876

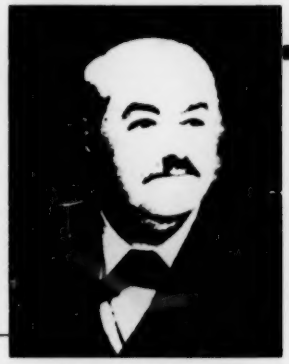
John Pool, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1876-1877

Governor Aycock
AND THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Beginning with the administration of Gov. Charles B. Aycock, a veritable educational renaissance occurred in North Carolina during the early years of the 20th century. The political campaign of 1900, like others during and immediately following the Reconstruction Era, began with a major focus on race and a platform calling for white supremacy. The Democratic candidate for governor, Charles B. Aycock, recognized the dangers inherent in such a campaign, and managed to turn public attention toward a crusade for universal education. He was ably assisted by Superintendent of Public Instruction James Y. Joyner, who served as superintendent from 1902 until 1919. A charismatic and dedicated professional, Joyner quickly became an effective politician and the prime mover in the campaign for universal public education.

Under Aycock and Joyner, and with help from Charles H. Mebane, Charles D. McIver, and Eugene C. Brooks, great progress was made in education, and these accomplishments continued far beyond their terms of office. The number of local tax districts increased, and approximately 300 ineffective districts were eliminated by consolidation. In 1901, the General Assembly for the first time made a direct appropriation of tax funds for public schools — $100,000 for each year of the biennium. At the same time, the old State Literary Fund was reorganized to provide a revolving loan fund for building schools. Until 1907, high schools existed only in special tax districts in the towns of the state, but that year the General Assembly authorized establishment of rural high schools.

In 1913, the first Compulsory Attendance Act was passed which required all children between the ages of 8 and 12 to attend school at least four months per year. Federal



Gov. Daniel G. Fowle

Supt. Sidney M. Finger

1880 **Alfred M. Scales** Gov. 1885-1889 **Daniel G. Fowle** Gov. 1889-1891 **1890**

John C. Scarborough Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1877-1885

Sidney M. Finger Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1885-1893

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legislation (the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917) provided some federal funds for vocational education and agriculture, and home economics became a part of the curriculum in North Carolina public schools. Legislation was passed to allow counties to issue bonds to build schools. These bond funds, together with the Rosenwald Fund which was used primarily for building schools for rural blacks, brought about a major increase in construction and renovation of buildings.

In 1919, the Constitution was amended to increase the mandated school term from four months to six months. At about the same time, a State Board of Examiners was established as an agent of the State Board of Education to be responsible for the certification of all teachers. Although local funding still far exceeded state funding, education in North Carolina was clearly on the move, and prospects remained bright for the future until 1929.

The Great Depression AND THE SCHOOL MACHINERY ACT

The stock market crash in October 1929, followed swiftly by the Great Depression, brought a halt to almost three decades of progress and prosperity. Schools suffered terribly, since there simply was not enough money to pay salaries and keep the schools open. Since financial support for schools was still primarily a local matter, the conditions of education varied from county to county, but no county in the State was able to continue to operate its schools at the same level as in pre-Depression years. Conditions continued to worsen in 1930 and 1931, and prospects were dim for any substantial recovery in the foreseeable future.

Supt. John C. Scarborough

Clean-up Day, First day of school, c. 1900

1890 **Thomas M. Holt** Gov. 1891-1893 | **Elias Carr** Gov. 1893-1897 | **Daniel L. Russell** Gov. 1897-1901 1900

John C. Scarborough Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1893-1897

Charles H. Mebane Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1897-1901

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It was at this point that the North Carolina General Assembly took action that was both courageous and statesmanlike. Recognizing that it was impossible for many counties to provide even minimum funding for education and that the remaining counties were also in a very depressed economic condition, the 1931 General Assembly undertook the gigantic task of providing a free and uniform education to all the children of North Carolina. The legislation enacted to bring about this dramatic and unprecedented reorganization and change in North Carolina's public schools was known as the "School Machinery Act." Enacted by the 1931 session of the General Assembly and refined and fine tuned by the 1933 session, the "School Machinery Act" included almost all of the basic elements contained in the public school laws in effect today, Chapter 115C of the General Statues of North Carolina.

The concept of full State support for school operation costs was a dramatic reversal of previous funding for public schools. Counties were still required to provide and maintain buildings, and were urged to supplement State funding to improve and expand programs, but there was no required matching funds in order to be eligible to receive State funds. It is difficult today to understand fully the tremendous courage and vision that this group of legislators must have had to take such bold action to save public schools from possible extinction.

Among other things, the School Machinery Act established the county as the basic governmental unit for operating public schools. All special charter districts were abolished, but such districts were allowed to re-establish themselves if they wished to do so and if their financial situation was such that they could afford to do so. Over time, most of the districts chose to reconstitute themselves.

The School Machinery Act provided the life preserver necessary for the education system to survive the Great Depression. The 1933 General Assembly expanded on the work done two years earlier and put education on the move again. In 1933, the school

Gov. Charles B. Aycock

1901

- Governor Charles B. Aycock's influence increased the number of local tax districts by consolidation and reorganized the old State Literary Fund as a revolving loan fund for building schoolhouses.

Supt. James Y. Joyner

1907

- Establishment of rural high schools authorized by the General Assembly.
- Normal schools for teacher training established.

1900-1910

- More than 3,000 schoolhouses built, an average of one per day.

1900 | **Charles B. Aycock** Gov. 1901-1905 | **Robert B. Glenn** Gov. 1905-1909 | **William W. Kitchin** Gov. 1909-1913 | **1910**

Thomas F. Toon
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1901-1902

James Y. Joyner
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1902-1919

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term was extended from six to eight months and many cuts that had been made prior to 1931 were restored. For the first time, the General Assembly began to provide support in such areas as library books and school supplies. In 1935, the state provided a textbook rental plan whereby all textbooks required in grades one through 12 could be rented at approximately 20 percent of the cost of the textbook itself. Two years later, this textbook rental plan was modified by providing that all textbooks in grades one through seven should be provided free of charge to students.

Improvement continued into the 1940s, and further changes occurred in the school system. Legislation provided a retirement plan for state employees, including all public school personnel. In 1942, a constitutional amendment established a State Board of Education in a new and strengthened format. This amendment terminated the State School Commission which had been charged with responsibility for handling the fiscal affairs of public education. The General Assembly created under the State Board of Education a Controller's Office to carry out similar functions in the name of the Board.

Further changes increased the compulsory attendance age from 14 to 16, added the 12th grade, extended the school term to nine months, and created the school lunch program. The State Board of Education was authorized to use public funds for special education programs, thus providing "for the promotion, operation and supervision of special courses of instruction for handicapped, crippled, and other classes of individuals requiring special type instruction." The school health program received increased funds, enabling it to expand. The General Assembly authorized a self-insurance plan for school buildings and properties with optional participation. In 1949, the first state bond revenue for public school construction was authorized by the General Assembly and approved by the vote of the people in the amount of $50 million.

Gov. Locke Craig

Supt. Clyde Eugene Brooks

1913

- Compulsory Attendance Law passed by General Assembly.
- An act to provide a six-month school term passed.

1914

- Federal Smith-Lever Act provided funds for support of vocational education in public schools, including agriculture, trade, home economics, and teacher training.

1917

- Responsibility for certification of teachers given to a central State Board of Examiners.

1910 **Locke Craig**
Gov. 1913-1917

Thomas W. Bickett
Gov. 1917-1921 **1920**

Eugene C. Brooks
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1919-1923

The Middle Years
OF THE 20TH CENTURY

During the second half of this century, the Civil Rights Movement greatly affected North Carolina's school system. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against separation of races in public schools in Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka. The following year, the North Carolina General Assembly proposed a constitutional amendment known as the Pearsall Plan, which would transfer complete authority over enrollment and assignment of children in public schools from the State Board of Education to county and city boards. The amendment was ratified by popular vote in September of 1956, and was eventually declared unconstitutional in 1966. In 1964, the National Civil Rights Act was passed and discrimination in public education was prohibited. Other significant events in public education during the 1950s included passage of an additional $50 million bond issue for school construction and the establishment of the community college system by the 1957 General Assembly.

The decade of the '60s was greatly influenced by passage of the National Civil Rights Act of 1964. Although Brown vs. Topeka had been resolved 10 years earlier, it was not until the passage of the civil rights legislation that desegregation of schools in North Carolina really began.

But other things were happening in the public schools. A bare beginning was made in research-oriented programs, including the establishment of a summer program for gifted students known as the Governor's School, an advancement school for students with learning difficulties, and the Learning Institute of North Carolina with research as its major emphasis.

1921

- State Public School Fund established, with money allocated "to all counties unable to provide a six-month school term."
- Act passed for adoption of textbooks in elementary schools.
- Annual State appropriation established "for the encouragement of vocational education."

Supt. Arch T. Allen

Gov. O. Max Gardner

1920 | **Cameron Morrison** Gov. 1921-1925 | **Angus W. McLean** Gov. 1925-1929 | **O. Max Gardner** Gov. 1929-1933 | **1930**

Arch T. Allen
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1923-1934

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In addition, the Comprehensive School Improvement Program, aimed primarily at improving instruction at the early childhood level became a catalyst that moved the state in the direction of a full kindergarten program. A $100 million bond issue for school construction continued developing the concept that the state must support local efforts to provide adequate school facilities. Textbooks at the secondary level, which had been rented from the inception of the textbook program in 1935, were included in the free textbook program already in effect in elementary schools. Another important part of education in the 1960s resulted from massive increases in federal funding for education (including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) and the accompanying regulations with regard to the use of these funds which sometimes changed programs as well as expanded them.

Finally, and most importantly, a blue ribbon study commission was appointed by Governor Dan Moore to make a comprehensive report on the state's public school system and to make recommendations for improvement in the system. The commission made 172 separate recommendations, the great majority of which have been implemented. So important was the report that it came to be known as a "blueprint for education."

The Modern Era

Expansion and improvement of educational programs throughout the 1970s and the early 1980s greatly strengthened North Carolina's system of public education. In 1972, the first two of eight regional service centers were established in educational districts seven and eight (the geographical areas most distant from the state offices in Raleigh). The concept of regional centers involved the placement of state level staff members as close as possible to the local education agencies served. The original intent was to

Supt Clyde A. Erwin

1931

- General Assembly assumed responsibility for financing a six-month school term for all children. Schools were rescued from a severe economic situation brought on by the Great Depression.
- State assumed minimum support for school libraries.

1933

- Three percent State sales tax adopted to finance a uniform eight-month school term. All local property taxes for schools were abolished and the State School Commission took over supervision of the School Transportation System.

1935-1937

- State Textbook Rental Plan established, 1935. Free textbooks provided for grades 1-7.

1930 — **John C. B. Ehringhaus**, Gov. 1933-1937 — **Clyde R. Hoey**, Gov. 1937-1941 — **1940**

Clyde A. Erwin
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1934-1952

provide one center in each of the state's eight educational districts, primarily through decentralization of the state agency staff, and this undertaking was completed through action by the 1977 General Assembly.

A $300 million state bond issue for school construction in 1973 provided additional support to local efforts to improve school facilities. Full funding for a 10-month salary plan for teachers was enacted by the 1973 General Assembly and provided for a 180-day school term, 12 1/2 days of annual leave for all school employees, and the same legal holidays as provided to state employees. The same legislation provided a 12-month salary schedule for principals and central office personnel.

The first State-funded pilot kindergarten programs were provided by the 1973 General Assembly. The legislation provided for phasing in additional programs over a period of years with the goal of making kindergarten available to all eligible children on a statewide basis by 1978-79. In actuality, the phase-in was completed by 1977-78. The Primary Reading Program, enacted in 1975, provided similar benefits to those included in the kindergarten programs in grades one, two and three by supplying an assistant in each classroom, and expanded materials and increased emphasis on reading.

Concern from many sources, including the General Assembly, that schools be accountable led to the enactment of legislation requiring statewide testing programs. One statute required that each student prior to high school graduation would make a minimum score on a statewide competency test developed by the State Board of Education and with the score set by that body. Another statute required that each student in grades one, two, three, six and nine be given annually a comprehensive, standardized test selected by the State Board of Education with full summative information being reported regarding the results of these tests. Two testing commissions were appointed to advise the State Board of Education concerning all matters relating to implementation of the two testing statutes.

Gov. John Melville Broughton

1941-1943

- Teachers and State Employees Retirement System established, 1941.
- Twelfth grade added, 1942.
- State-supported school term extended to nine months, 1943.
- School lunch program began, 1943.

1946-1949

- Compulsory attendance age raised from 14 to 16, 1946.
- General Assembly authorized State Board of Education to use public funds for special education, 1946.
- First State bond funds for public school construction issued, 1949.

Gov. W. Kerr Scott

1940 | John Melville Broughton Gov. 1941-1945 | Robert Gregg Cherry Gov. 1945-1949 | William Kerr Scott Gov. 1949-1953 | 1950

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During this period also, major changes took place in the availability of educational opportunities for the handicapped. At the national level, Public Law 94-142 authorized the expenditure of significant federal funds for special education programs and placed strict regulatory requirements on local boards of education with regard to the use of these funds. At the state level, the so-called Creech Bill mandated that each local board of education would provide a free and appropriate educational opportunity to every child between the ages of 5 and 18 regardless of his handicap and the cost of the program. The magnitude of this change can best be realized when it is noted that prior to 1974 a handicapped student could be refused admittance to public education programs if it were determined by the school administrators that the child could not profit from these programs.

In 1979, the General Assembly passed non-public schools legislation which removed any supervisory authority of non-public schools from the State Board of Education. As a result of this legislation, immediate attempts began to teach children at home. In August of that year, the Attorney General ruled that instruction of a child in the home was not a "school" within the meaning of the Compulsory Attendance Act. The Board relied on this ruling until 1985 when the court ruled that the North Carolina statute did not prohibit home instruction as an alternate means of complying with the Act. North Carolina could prohibit home instruction altogether or could permit home instruction with regulations (Delconte vs. State).

Expansion continued into the 1980s. In 1980, the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics admitted its first students. This tuition-free high school for exceptionally gifted science and math students became the first of its kind in the nation. In 1981, a separate state board was established for community colleges.

Supt. Charles F. Carroll

1953-1957

- $50 million bond for school construction passed, 1953
- United States Supreme Court ruled against separation of races in schools in Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, 1954
- Pearsall Plan adopted in response to Brown v. Board of Education. City and county school boards given authority over enrollment and assignment of students in schools and on buses, 1955
- Community College Act passed, 1957

Gov. Luther Hodges

1950 **William B. Umstead**
Gov. 1953-1954

Luther H. Hodges
Gov. 1954-1961 **1960**

Charles F. Carroll
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1952-1969

Educational Reform

As part of a nationwide trend, improvement of North Carolina public education became the goal of the late 20th century. Educational inadequacies pointed out in the federal report, *A Nation At Risk*, fueled growing concern with America's educational system. In 1984, North Carolina followed with its own assessment of education when Governor James B. Hunt established the North Carolina Commission on Education for Economic Growth. The Commission researched the status of the public education system and proposed a plan for "ensuring the future prosperity and well-being of our children and the continuing soundness of our state's economy." Major responsibility was placed on the State Board of Education for ensuring that these new initiatives be implemented in a comprehensive, cost-effective manner.

This renewed enthusiasm resulted in many changes, some immediate and some long-range. In 1983, the General Assembly raised high school graduation requirements from 18 to 20 credit units to be effective with the class of 1987. The North Carolina Scholars Program, approved by the State Board of Education in March 1983, also was initiated to be an incentive to high school students for academic excellence. The program provided for a well-balanced, challenging curriculum of 22 units for graduates who are recognized as North Carolina Scholars.

The second half of the 1980s marked a strong push for educational reform in North Carolina. In 1985, the General Assembly passed historic legislation, directing the State Board of Education to adopt a basic education program. The Basic Education Program, originally scheduled to be implemented over eight years, began in the 1985-86 school year. It offered a comprehensive basic education to all North Carolina students. The

Gov. Terry Sanford

Gov. Daniel K. Moore

Gov. Robert W. Scott

1963-1969

- $100 million bond issue for school construction passed, 1963.
- Governor's School, a summer program for gifted students, founded, 1963.
- Community College System began operating on statewide basis, 1963.
- National Civil Rights Act passed, barring discrimination in public education, 1964.
- First State-funded experimental program, the Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP), implemented, 1964.
- Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC) created to provide research in education, 1964.
- General Assembly provided free textbooks in all high schools, 1967.
- Kindergarten demonstration centers funded in the State's eight education districts, 1969.

1960 | **Terry Sanford** Gov. 1961-1965 | **Daniel K. Moore** Gov. 1965-1969 | **Robert W. Scott** Gov. 1969-1973 | **1970**

A. Craig Phillips
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1969-1989

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program outlined a curriculum in the areas of the arts, communication, media and computer skills, second languages, healthful living, mathematics, science, social studies, and vocational education. The implementation schedule for the BEP was lengthened in the early 1990s because of the economic recession, but it is scheduled to be completed in the mid-1990s. When it is complete, it will offer all North Carolina students up-to-date textbooks and equipment, smaller classes, adequate libraries and support services, such as social workers and guidance counselors. Dropout prevention, also, is a prominent goal of the BEP.

In 1985, the General Assembly continued searching for better ways of recognizing the teaching profession through a pilot Career Development Program at 16 school systems. This program awarded quality classroom instruction and provided criteria and standards designed to improve teacher education training and the quality of teachers. Although the Career Development pilot was not adopted statewide at the end of the four-year pilot period, it paved the way for other reforms, including differentiated pay.

In 1989, several things happened to shift the focus of public schools and to strengthen efforts at reform. Bob Etheridge, a former General Assembly member and sponsor of the Basic Education Program, was elected State Superintendent. Superintendent A. Craig Phillips retired at the end of 1988 after serving 20 years in that office.

State Superintendent Bob Etheridge restructured the Department of Public Instruction and cut the number of positions in the Department from 1,014 to 820 by July 1, 1993. Superintendent Etheridge also initiated efforts to use federal Chapter 1 money for early childhood education for disadvantaged children and to obtain State funding for early

Supt. A. Craig Phillips

Gov. James E. Holshouser.

Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr.

1971-1979

- Additional 55 kindergarten centers approved, 1971.
- First Regional Education Service Centers established, 1972.
- $300 million bond issue for school construction passed, 1973.
- General Assembly provides funds for 10-month term for teachers and 12-month term for principals, 1973.
- Primary Reading Program initiated, 1975.
- Kindergarten made available to all N. C. children in 1976.
- Statewide Testing Program established, consisting of Annual Testing and Competency Testing, 1977.
- Regional Education Centers extended to all eight educational districts, 1977.
- Comprehensive program of special education set up by General Assembly under provisions of federal Public Law 94-142, 1977.
- Non-public school responsibility moved from State Board of Education to the Governor's Office, 1979.

1970 **James E. Holshouser, Jr.** **Gov. 1973-1977** **James B. Hunt, Jr.** **Gov. 1977-1985** **1980**

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childhood programs, to lower the dropout rate and to boost scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and to increase professionalism among teachers and principals, as well as other efforts.

By 1993, the efforts paid off with the lowest dropout rate in State history, less than 3 percent per year, and with increases in State average SAT scores. In fact, in four years (1989-1993) North Carolina's SAT scores improved by 23 points, thanks to efforts by Superintendent Etheridge, the General Assembly and local schools. A greater emphasis on rigorous coursework, higher expectations and better access to the PSAT, all played a role in the improvement. Also by 1993, teachers were benefiting from a new teacher salary schedule, fully implemented in 1992. Under this scale, beginning teachers with a bachelor's degree earned $19,820, and teachers with 31 plus years of experience earned slightly over $36,000 per year.

In 1989, in addition to the other changes underway, the General Assembly approved the School Improvement and Accountability Act. This law came out of concerns raised by national studies of school structures and out of a growing belief at the State and local levels that school restructuring needed to be done from the school level upward, not pushed from the top down.

The School Improvement and Accountability Act provided more flexibility than school systems had ever had. Local schools and school systems were charged with creating local school improvement plans, including measurable milestones and goals. In their plans, local educators could request and receive waivers of many State laws and State Board of Education policies, if they showed how they would use the waiver to help improve student achievement. Their plans also could include differentiated pay plans, designed to reward teachers and other certified staff for extra duties, exceptional performance or other achievements.

In 1992, the original School Improvement and Accountability Act was amended to require more participation by parents and teachers in creating school improvement plans.

Gov. James G. Martin

Supt. Bob Etheridge

1980-89

- Graduation requirements increased, 1983.
- North Carolina Commission on Education for Economic Growth issued report and recommendations spurring widespread effort for education reforms in North Carolina, 1981.
- Basic Education Program enacted by General Assembly, 1985.
- Statewide standards for promotion implemented, 1986.
- School Facilities Finance Act approved, spurring construction and renovation of school facilities, 1987.
- Senate Bill 2 enacted by General Assembly, bolstering autonomy of local schools, but holding them accountable for results, 1989.

1980

James G. Martin
Gov. 1985-

1990

Bob Etheridge
Suprintendent of Public Instruction, 1989-

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Also, the action in 1992 placed more emphasis on school building level improvement plans used in the Performance-based Accountability Program, a part of the 1989 act. Local plans are reviewed by the Department of Public Instruction and recommended for State Board approval by the State Superintendent. Plans are for three years. School systems are held accountable for achievement through a State Report Card, issued every year, beginning in 1990. The Report Cards provide information on student achievement, local school systems characteristics and how well each local system's achievement compares with similar systems throughout North Carolina.

As a part of the new accountability measures, the Department of Public Instruction developed new end-of-grade tests, given to students in grades three through eight. These tests were given for the first time in 1993. Requiring students to answer open-ended questions, to analyze and to use higher order thinking skills, these tests are considered more rigorous than any North Carolina used before. These tests provide accountability at the elementary and middle school levels, just as the end-of-course testing has been providing in high schools since it was initiated in 1985.

With the 21st century only a few years away, North Carolina is continuing to reform schools. The State's leadership in the General Assembly and in other quarters has expressed its belief that education should remain at the top of the State's agenda. Even in 1990-91, when the State faced the worst recession and budget shortfall since the Great Depression, the General Assembly did continue, in a limited way, funding of the Basic Education Program and other programs.

In 1992, North Carolinians elected James B. Hunt, Jr., as Governor for a third term. Hunt served previously as Governor from 1972-1980. Known as a strong advocate for public schools, Governor Hunt focused the first year of his third term on the needs of children and schools, including an early childhood initiative to provide quality day care to young children and on the development of a new exit examination for high school seniors. That examination is slated to go into effect at the end of the century. He also focused on the need to give North Carolina governors the veto, but these efforts were rejected by the 1993 General Assembly.

Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr.

- SAT scores increase 23 points in 4 years, 1989-1993.
- School Improvement and Accountability Act (Senate Bill 2) revised, pushing decision making to the school building site and requiring parents and teachers to be involved in planning, 1992.
- High school graduation requirements strengthened for the class of 1996.
- End-of-grade testing begins in grades 3-8, 1993.

1990 **James B. Hunt, Jr.**
Gov. 1992-Present **2000**

Nine school systems are involved in pilots of Outcome-based Education, a new process of organizing schools to emphasize what students need to be successful in the 21st century. School systems across the state are implementing Effective Schools training, year-round education and other innovations.

Some issues are continuing parts of the debate over how to best provide quality public education. School funding differences between low-wealth and small school systems and more affluent and larger systems are a continuing problem.

School facilities still need attention. In 1986, the General Assembly continued to recognize the need for state participation in upgrading school facilities and enacted an additional 1/2 cent sales tax with 60 percent of the county's portion of the funds earmarked for school facility needs. This supplemented an earlier 1/2 cent sales tax enacted in 1983 which had mandated 40 percent of the county's share for school facilities for a five-year period. By 1993, school systems had identified facility needs totaling $5.6 billion over 10 years, including replacing or updating facilities that are more than 75 years old.

The school reform movement, which began in the early 1980s, has not lost momentum in North Carolina. Instead, local school systems and local educators still continue to improve.

High school graduation requirements were increased once more in 1991. North Carolina became the first state to require students to successfully complete Algebra I before graduation, for example.

Educators and state leaders expect that even higher levels of achievement and excellence will be expected in coming years as reform efforts begin to bear more fruit and as the needs of the 21st century economy and world become more clearly understood.

The people have a right to the privilege of education
and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right.

Article I, Constitution of North Carolina

2000 **2010**

Highlights of Public School Education in North Carolina

1776	First State Constitution adopted.
1825	Literary Fund established by General Assembly to subsidize schools.
1835	State Constitution revised.
1839	First common school law enacted, establishing the principle of combined state and local funds for school support, and providing for the election of superintendents in each county to establish districts and appoint committees.
1840	First North Carolina public school established in Rockingham County.
1852	Office of Superintendent of Common Schools created. Calvin H. Wiley first to occupy position.
1868	New State Constitution adopted, authorizing the Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction to replace the earlier abolished Office of Superintendent of Common Schools, and creating a State Board of Education.
1869	General Assembly added general school tax, a prescribed four-month school term, and education of blacks.
1901	Governor Charles B. Aycock's influence increased the number of local tax districts, abolished 300 school districts by consolidation, and reorganized the old Literary Fund as a revolving loan fund for building schoolhouses.
1901-03	First direct state appropriation by the General Assembly of tax funds in support of public education.
1907	General Assembly authorized establishment of rural high schools.
1913	Local bond issues for school construction authorized.
	First Compulsory Attendance Law passed.
1914	Money for support of vocational education in public schools including agriculture, trade, home economics, and teacher education, provided by Smith-Lever Act.
1917	Responsibility of certification of all teachers given to central State Board of Examiners.
	Smith-Hughes Act expanded vocational education.
1919-20	State-supported school term extended to six months.
1931	School Machinery Act passed.
1933-34	State-supported school term extended to eight months.

1935-36	State textbook rental plan established.
1937-38	Free textbooks provided for grades one through seven.
1941	Teachers and state employees retirement system established.
1942	Constitutional amendment provided State Board of Education appointed by the Governor.
	Twelfth grade added.
1943	State-supported school term extended to nine months.
	School lunch program created.
1946-47	Compulsory attendance age extended from 14 to 16.
1947	General Assembly authorized State Board of Education to use public funds for special education programs.
1949	First state bond funds for public school construction.
	State Board of Education establishes self-insurance program for school buildings.
1953	$50 million bond issue for school construction passed.
1954	U.S. Supreme Court ruled against separation of races in public schools in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka.
1955	Pearsall Plan presented to General Assembly, resulting in transfer from State Board of Education to county and city boards, complete authority over enrollment, assignment of children in public schools, and buses.
1957	Community College Act passed.
1963	Governor's School, a summer program for gifted students, founded.
	$100 million bond issue for school construction passed.
1964	National Civil Rights Act passed; discrimination in public education prohibited; Pearsall Plan declared unconstitutional.
	First state-funded experimental program, the Comprehensive School Improvement program (CSIP), implemented.
	Advancement School for students with learning difficulties established.
	Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC) created to provide research in education.
1967	General Assembly funded textbooks in all high schools.

1968 Report of Gov. Dan Moore's Study Commission on the Public School System of North Carolina.

1971 North Carolina Constitution revision removes Superintendent of Public Instruction from membership on State Board of Education and makes him chief executive officer of the Board.

Legislation established State Department of Public Education, consisting of Department of Public Instruction, Office of the Controller, and Department of Community Colleges.

1972 First two regional education service centers established.

1973 $300 million bond issue for school construction passed.

General Assembly provided funds for 10-month term for teachers, 12 months for principals.

Statewide experimental kindergarten approved by General Assembly.

1975 Primary Reading Program initiated.

1976-77 Full-day kindergarten made available to all children in the state.

1977 Statewide Testing Program, consisting of Annual Testing and Competency Testing Programs, established.

Three additional regional education centers were established completing the goal of one service center for each of the eight educational districts in the state.

Chapter 927 of the Session Laws of 1977 (Creech Bill) established a multifaceted, comprehensive program of special education based on federal requirements included in Public Law 94-142.

1979 Non-public school responsibility removed from State Board of Education.

1980 North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics admitted its first students.

1981 State Board of Community Colleges established.

1983 Graduation requirements increased from 18 to 20 units, effective with the the class of 1987.

North Carolina Scholars program started.

1984 North Carolina Commission on Education for Economic Growth issued report and recommendations that influenced reform efforts.

1985 Basic Education Program enacted by General Assembly for implementation 1985-93.

North Carolina Career Development Program started.

End-of-Course Testing Program began.

1986 Statewide promotion program implemented.

State funded summer school program initiated in grades three, six, and eight.

1988 Fiscal functions transferred to Superintendent of Public Instruction by the General Assembly.

1989 School Improvement and Accountability Act approved by General Assembly giving local school systems more flexibility, autonomy and making them more accountable for student achievement.

1992 Ninth graders entering high school face tougher graduation requirements.

1992 School Improvement and Accountability Act is revised. The new Performance-based Accountability Program pushes decision-making to the school building site and requires parents and teachers to be involved in school improvement planning.

1993 The State's new end-of-grade testing program begins in grades three through eight. These tests include multiple-choice and open-ended test questions.

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